

Samples of Student Writing

Following are writing samples that have been annotated to illustrate the criteria required to meet the Common Core State Standards for particular types of writing—argument, informative/explanatory text, and narrative—in a given grade. Each of the samples exhibits at least the level of quality required to meet the Writing standards for that grade.

The range of accomplishment within each grade reflects differences in individual development as well as in the conditions under which the student writers were expected to work. Some of the samples were written in class or as homework; others were written for on-demand assessments; still others were the result of sustained research projects. Where possible, each sample includes information about the circumstances under which it was produced. The samples come from students in kindergarten through grade 12. The students attended school in a number of states and districts across the country.

At the lower grades, the samples include “opinion” writing, an elementary type of argument in which students give reasons for their opinions and preferences. Because reasons are required, such writing helps prepare students for drafting the arguments they will be expected to create beginning in grade 6.

Acknowledgment

The Standards work group would like to express its appreciation to teachers and students at Monte Vista High School in California and the Randolph Technical Career Center in Vermont; other colleagues in California, Massachusetts, and Washington state; and ACT, Inc., and the *Concord Review*, who helped find and obtain permission for several of the samples included in the set. The group also would like to express its appreciation to the New Standards Project and to the International Reading Association, which allowed the use of several samples from their publications, and to the other student writers who granted permission to reproduce their work here.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Student Sample: K, Argument (Opinion) “My fabit Book is do you Want to be my FRIEND” | 6 |
| Student Sample: K, Informative/Explanatory “Frag (Frogs)” | 7 |
| Student Sample: K, Narrative “I Went to Disnand” | 9 |
| Student Sample: Grade 1, Informative/Explanatory “My Big Book About Spain” | 11 |
| Student Sample: Grade 1, Narrative “I bot a little cotton ball” | 13 |
| Student Sample: Grade 2, Argument (Opinion) “Owl Moon” | 15 |
| Student Sample: Grade 2, Narrative “My first tooth is gone” | 17 |
| Student Sample: Grade 3, Informative/Explanatory “Horses” | 18 |
| Student Sample: Grade 3, Narrative “When my Puppys Ranaway” | 22 |
| Student Sample: Grade 4, Argument (Opinion) “Zoo Field Trip” | 25 |
| Student Sample: Grade 4, Narrative “Glowing Shoes” | 27 |
| Student Sample: Grade 5, Informative/Explanatory “Author Response: Roald Dahl” | 29 |
| Student Sample: Grade 5, Narrative “Getting Shot and Living Through It” | 31 |
| Student Sample: Grade 6, Argument “Dear Mr. Sandler” | 36 |
| Student Sample: Grade 6, Argument “A Pet Story About My Cat . . . Gus” | 38 |
| Student Sample: Grade 7, Argument “Video Cameras in Classrooms” | 40 |
| Student Sample: Grade 7, Informative/Explanatory “A Geographical Report” | 42 |
| Student Sample: Grade 8, Informative/Explanatory “Football” | 47 |
| Student Sample: Grade 8, Informative/Explanatory “The Old Man and the Sea” | 49 |
| Student Sample: Grade 8, Narrative “Miss Sadie” | 52 |

Permissions

The following student writing samples have been reprinted for the Common Core State Standards Initiative with the express permission of the following organizations and individuals.

ACT, Inc.:

Untitled essay on dress codes

California Department of Education:

“Football”; “Miss Sadie”

The *Concord Review*:

“In the Wake of the Spanish Lady: American Economic Resilience in the Aftermath of the Influenza Epidemic of 1918” by Brooke Granowski, *Concord Review*, 20(1), 203–216 (©2009 Concord Review, Inc.)

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

“Dear Mr. Sandler”; “A Pet Story About My Cat . . . Gus”; “Animal Farm”

Monte Vista High School in California:

“The True Meaning of Friendship”; “Lives on Mango, Rides the Whale”; untitled essay on civil disobedience in India; “Marching to His Own Beat”; “Summary of Key Points”

The National Center on Education and the Economy, on behalf of New Standards:

“My fabit Book is do you Want to be my FRIEND”; “Fraggs (Frogs)”; “I Went to Disnand”; “My Big Book About Spain”; “I bot a little cotton ball”; “Owl Moon”; “My first tooth is gone”; “Horses”; “When my Puppys Ranaway”; “Zoo Field Trip”; “Author Response: Roald Dahl”; “Getting Shot and Living Through It”; “A Geographical Report”; “The Old Man and the Sea”; “_____ School Bond Levy”

Randolph Technical Career Center in Vermont:

“Wood Joints”; “TIG/GTAW Welding”

Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction:

“Glowing Shoes”; “Video Cameras in Classrooms”

Permission to reprint each of the following samples was granted by its author:

“Freedom From Structure”; “Fact vs. Fiction and All the Grey Space in Between”; “The Making of a Human Voice and How to Use It”

Student Sample: Grade 2, Argument (Opinion)

This opinion piece about a work of literature was produced in class.

Owl Moon
When you go owling
you don't need words, or worm
or any thing, but hope. This
is the book of Owl Moon.
This book is written by
Jane Yolen. I like that
phrase Because The boy
was happy becaus he got
to go owling and hes been
wonted to go owling for a
long time and he finally
got to go.

When other Kids are
happy that makes me
happy. I like it Because
it makes me feel good
Because you don't haf't
to have words to go owling
but you haf't to have
hope to see an owl.

Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **introduces the topic (with some words from the book) and the title.**
 - *When you go owling you don't need words, or worm (warm) or any thing. but hope. This is (from) the book of Owl Moon.*
- **states an opinion about the book and supplies reasons to support the opinion.**
 - *I like that phrase Because The boy was happy becaus (because) he got to go owling and hes (he's) been wonted (wanting) to go owling for a long time and he finally got to go. When other kids are happy that makes me happy.*
- **uses linking words to connect opinion and reasons.**
 - *I like it **Because** it makes me feel good **Because** you don't haft (have) to have words to go owling **but** you haft to have hope to see an owl.*
- **provides a concluding statement.**
 - *I like it Because it makes me feel good Because you don't haft (have) to have words to go owling but you haft to have hope to see an owl.*
- **demonstrates growing command of the conventions of standard written English.**
 - This piece illustrates the writer's understanding that capital letters are used in a title, that the pronoun *I* should be capitalized, and that sentences should begin with a capital letter. The title of the book is underlined, and most words are spelled correctly. The use of the comma and the apostrophe is not consistent, but all sentences end with periods.

Student Sample: Grade 2, Narrative

This narrative was produced in class, and the writer likely received support from the teacher.

My first tooth is gone

I recall one winter night. I was four. My sister and I were running down the hall and something happend. It was my sister and I had run right into each other. Boy! did we cry. But not only did I cry, my tooth was bleeding. Then it felt funny. Then plop! There it was lying in my hand. So that night I put it under my pillow and in the morning I found something. It was not my tooth it was two dollars. So I ran down the hall, like I wasn't supposed to, and showed my mom and dad. They were suprised because when they lost teeth the only thing they got is 50¢.

Annotation

The writer of this piece

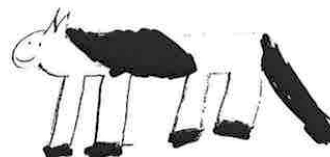
- **establishes a situation in time and place appropriate for what is to come.**
 - *I recall one winter night. I was four. My sister and I were running down the hall and something happend.*
- **recounts a well-elaborated sequence of events using temporal words to signal event order.**
 - *My sister and I were running down the hall **and** something happend. . . . **But** not only did I cry . . . **Then** it felt funny. **Then** plop! There it was lying in my hand.*
- **includes details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings.**
 - *Boy! did we cry.*
 - *Then it felt funny.*
 - *So I ran down the hall, like I wasn't supposed to, and showed my mom and dad*
- **provides a sense of closure.**
 - *They were suprised because when they lost teeth the only thing they got is 50¢.*
- **demonstrates growing command of the conventions of standard written English.**
 - This piece illustrates the writer's largely consistent use of beginning-of-sentence capitalization and end-of-sentence punctuation (both periods and exclamation points). The pronoun *I* is also capitalized consistently, and almost all the words are spelled correctly. The writer sets off a parenthetical element with commas and uses an apostrophe correctly.

Student Sample: Grade 3, Informative/Explanatory

This informative report is a process piece that was produced in class.

Horses

by Gwen



Why I Chose This Animal

I chose horses because I like to ride them. I also like to pet them. At the camp I go to everybody gets to have horses back riding lessons. Horses are so beautiful and fun to ride.

Horse Families

A mother or female horse is called a mare. A father or male horse is called a stallion. A foal is a baby horse.

Markings

A star is a little white diamond on the forelock. The forelock is a horses forehead. A race is a white line down the middle of the horses face. A blaze is kind of like a race but wider. If the white line on it face spreads out to its eyes it is called a white face. A small amount of white on its muzzle is called a snip. A muzzle is a horses mouth.

Breeds and Color Coats

Icelandic and Shetland ponies are very small when they are full grown. Chestnuts are red-brown and Roans have white hairs on their brown coat. Cream is a rare color. Rare means you don't see the color cream very much. Brown horses are brown all over. Blacks are black all over. Piebalds have black and white spots. Skewbalds are brown and white. Duns are a sandy brown with black manes and tails. Palominos have a yellowish coat and a shiny mane and tail. Grays have black and white hairs that make the color gray. Bays are brown with black manes,tails,and legs. Whites are white all over.

Breeds I Like

I like thoroughbreds because they are such a pretty brown. I like Arabians because their different coats are very beautiful and they're one of the oldest horses. I like Morgans because they have a beautiful reddish-brown coat. I like Lipizzaners because their white coats are so very pretty. I like Icelandic and Shetland ponies because they are so very cute, pretty and small.

Horses from Different Countries

Hocaidos are from Japan, Sumbas are from Indonesia, and Pintos are from America.

Horse Movement

A horse can walk, trot, canter, and gallop. A trot is kind of like a skip. A canter is like a fast skip. And a gallop is like running.

Friendly Horses

Horses can be great friends. Some horses can be dangerous. Most horses are are very lovable.

Foals

Baby horses are called foals. When a foal is ready to be born, the mare(the mother horse) lies down. As soon as the foal is born it struggles to break out of the membrane sack. When the foal breaks out of the sack it breathes on it's own. In about less than a minute the foal tries to get up and walk on it's own. Foals are born with their hooves first and head last. They drink their mother's milk until they're nine to ten months old.

How Long a Horse Lives

They live about 12 to 14 years.

Horses Habitat

You usually find horses in a barn. Some horses are wild. You can find horses on ranches too.

What Horses Eat

Horses eat hay, grass, barley and oats. The best food for a tired horse is oatmeal. Don't give a young horse too much oatmeal, it makes them too hyper. Horses love carrots, apples, molasses and sugar cubes. A block of salt gives the horse important minerals and makes them thirsty so the will drink enough water.

The Most Dangerous Horse

The most dangerous horse is the Percheron. Some people cannot pronounce that so they call them war horses. It is only dangerous if it is a wild horse. If it is wild it can kill you in 7 to 8 minutes. If it is trained it is nice like any other horse.

The Fastest Horse

The fastest horse is the wild stallion. If you thought, like I did that the Wild stallion was really dangerous you were wrong. A wild stallion can kill you but it could take up to one hour.

The First Horses

The first horses were no bigger than a fox and looked like a donkey. They had short tails and small ears. These horses lived millions of years ago, but now they are extinct. The only way we knew there were horses like that was because the first humans (our ancestors) painted these horses on ancient cave walls. These horses lived in North America and over the years they changed into the horses we know now.

Horse Survival

Most horses live on farms or ranches, but some horses are wild. Wild horses can survive hard weather and they graze on hills, marshes and grasslands. These days wild horses are very rare. People work to keep these wild horses free.

My Description of a Horse

A horse is a mammal because it has fur, drinks milk and their babies are born alive. They have four legs and hooves. They have beautiful long manes and tails.

I like horses and I know a lot about them. I like to ride them and they're so beautiful! Their coats are beautiful, I wish I had a horse of my own!

Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **introduces a topic.**
 - *I chose horses because I like to ride them. . . . Horses are so beautiful and fun to ride.*
- **creates an organizational structure (using headers) that groups related information together.**
 - *Horse Families; Markings; Breeds and Color Coats; Horses from Different Countries*
- **develops the topic with facts and details.**
 - *Hocaidos are from Japan, Sumbas are from Indonesia, and Pintos are from America.*
 - *A horse can walk, trot, canter, and gallop.*
 - *They [horses] live about 12 to 14 years.*
 - *The most dangerous horse is the Percheron.*
- **uses linking words and phrases to connect ideas within categories of information.**
 - *I like Morgans **because** they have a beautiful reddish-brown coat.*
 - ***When** a foal is ready to be born, the mare (the mother horse) lies down.*

- *The first horses were no bigger than a fox **and** looked like a donkey.*
 - *Most horses live on farms or ranches, **but** some horses are wild.*
- **provides a concluding section.**
 - *I like horses and I know a lot about them. I like to ride them and they're so beautiful!
Their coats are beautiful, I wish I had a horse of my own!*
- **demonstrates growing command of the conventions of standard written English (with occasional errors that do not interfere materially with the underlying message).**

Student Sample: Grade 3, Narrative

This narrative was produced in class, and the writer likely received support from the teacher.

When my Puppys Ran away
 ONE night when the air was warm, my puppys were sleeping on the back porch. Me and my sisters were getting ready for bed. When I was in bed, I read a chapter from my Nancy Drew book. When I finished the chapter I turned out my lamp. I wouldn't go to sleep.
 I went into the living room. I saw my mom getting ready to walk out the door. I asked "where are you going?" "Just for a drive" she replied. She had a worried exspression on her face.
 I knew somthing was wrong. I thought maybe if I went outside and played with my puppys. I would forget about moms worried exspression and go to sleep.
 When I opened The back door I expected my puppys Maggie and Tucker to jump up on me. They didn't come at all. I called, they still didn't come.
 Now I knew somthing was wrong. I went and woke up my dad, he said moms got it under control. I thought mom had taken them to the vet because somthing was really wrong. Dad wouldn't tell me anything else. I went to my room and cried. Thats all I rembered about that

night because I fall asleep.
 The next day I still worried.
 I worried all through school.
 When I got home from me
 and my mom made a snack for
 sisters.
 I asked my mom, "So were are
 the puppies?" Her eyes started to
 fill with tears as she answered
 my question with 3 words, "I don't
 know," she burst into tears. So did I.
 She hugged me. If we never find
 them I am sure they will have
 a good home.
 I went outside and sat in moms
 rocking chair. I cried some more.
 Mom came out I got up. She
 sat down and motioned me by waving
 her hand to come and sit on her lap.
 I went over and cried on her
 shoulder.
 After dinner that night we went
 looking for them, we couldn't find them
 at all.
 My dad after work each day went
 to the pound to see if they had
 picked them up. They didn't at all.
 I've got over them leaving because
 mom says we can get 2 new puppies
 very soon.

Annotation

The writer of this piece

- establishes a situation and introduces the narrator.
 - ONE night when the air was warm, my puppies were sleeping on the back porch. . . . I turned out my lamp. I wouldn't go to sleep. . . . I saw my mom getting ready to walk out the door. . . . She had a worried expression on her face. I knew something was wrong.
- organizes an event sequence that unfolds naturally and uses temporal words and phrases to signal event order.
 - **When** I opened The back door I expected my puppies Maggie and Tucker to jump up on me. They didn't come at all. I called, they **still** didn't come. **Now** I knew something was wrong.

- **uses dialogue and description of characters' actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.**
 - *I asked "where are you going"? "Just for a drive" she replied. She had a worried expression on her face.*
 - *I knew something was wrong.*
 - *I went to my room and cried.*
 - *The next day I still worried. I worried all through school.*
 - *Her eyes started to fill with tears as she answered my question with 3 words, "I don't know," she burst into tears. So did I. She hugged me.*
 - *I went outside and sat in moms rocking chair. I cried some more.*
 - *I've got over them leaving because mom says we can get 2 new puppies very soon.*
- **provides a sense of closure.**
 - *I've got over them leaving because mom says we can get 2 new puppies very soon.*
- **demonstrates growing command of the conventions of standard written English (with occasional errors that do not interfere materially with the underlying message).**